CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

NEWS RELEASE

Department of Toxic Substances Control

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Cal/EPA Rolls Out Mobile Laboratory to Assist in Terror Attacks, Natural Disasters

SACRAMENTO – California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) Secretary Alan Lloyd, California Office of Homeland Security Director Matt Bettenhausen, and Leonard Robinson, Acting Director of the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), today unveiled the state's mobile toxics laboratory. The lab, capable of analyzing samples at the scene and sending the analytical results to decision makers by satellite, is the only facility of its kind in use west of the Mississippi River. Currently two other states have mobile labs: New York and South Carolina.

"The mobile lab is an integrated platform that extends traditional lab-based analytical capabilities into the field," said Secretary Lloyd. "The unit is modular so that, in the future, analytical instruments can be changed out to enhance its flexibility or expand its capability. With this lab, the state will be better prepared to respond to emergencies, and to make decisions based on analytical data."

The mobile laboratory, built by California based ENG Mobile Systems, Inc, of Concord was funded by a one million dollar federal grant through California Office of Homeland Security. Computer systems and instruments onboard the mobile lab were designed by Agilent Technologies of Palo Alto. While the primary purpose of the lab is on-site analysis during a terrorist event, the unit can also be used in the event of a natural disaster (such as fire, earthquake, or flood) for the detection of hazardous substances or materials that have been released into the environment.

"The Governor has made homeland security a top priority in California," said Bettenhausen. "We are pleased to fund this project, which will enhance our ability to effectively respond to a terrorist attack and also utilize innovative technology developed by California businesses."

Acting Director of DTSC, Leonard Robinson, said, "As an emergency response vehicle, the mobile lab has the capability to detect and confirm the presence of toxic emissions and chemical agents in the environment. On-site data is crucial for incident commanders in taking appropriate response actions concerning evacuation, providing shelter, treating victims, and re-occupying impacted areas."

The mobile lab is constructed on a Ford F550 Super Duty Chassis with special modifications for emergency response. The unit includes separate and self-contained areas for sample preparation and analysis. Several safety features, such as high efficiency particulate air filter (HEPA), fume hood, and glove box connected to a bio-decontamination system, are incorporated for workers' protection.

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A satellite system is installed into the vehicle to facilitate the data transmission to the DTSC's Hazardous Materials Laboratory or to other fixed labs, other state departments, and federal laboratories for data sharing and decision making. A global position system (GPS) is installed so that the exact location of the lab can be reported.

In addition to terrorist attacks, the mobile lab also can assist with environmental project management to expedite site cleanup activities for site mitigation, surveillance, law enforcement and for long term monitoring of hazardous substances at Brownfield and superfund sites.

Photo available on DTSC website @ www.dtsc.ca.gov/NewsReleases
DTSC Demonstrates Mobile Lab:
In a mock exercise, DTSC Emergency Response Team staffer Nancy McGee demonstrates how field samples, which could be potentially harmful, are passed through a special door for analysis in the DTSC's Mobile Laboratory.

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The Department of Toxic Substances Control's mission is to restore, protect, and enhance the environment and ensure public health, environmental quality and economic vitality by regulating hazardous waste, conducting and overseeing cleanups, and developing and promoting pollution prevention.